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A *MR Martin, Paul*

S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D before the

K I N G,

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St. J A M E S's-Chapel,

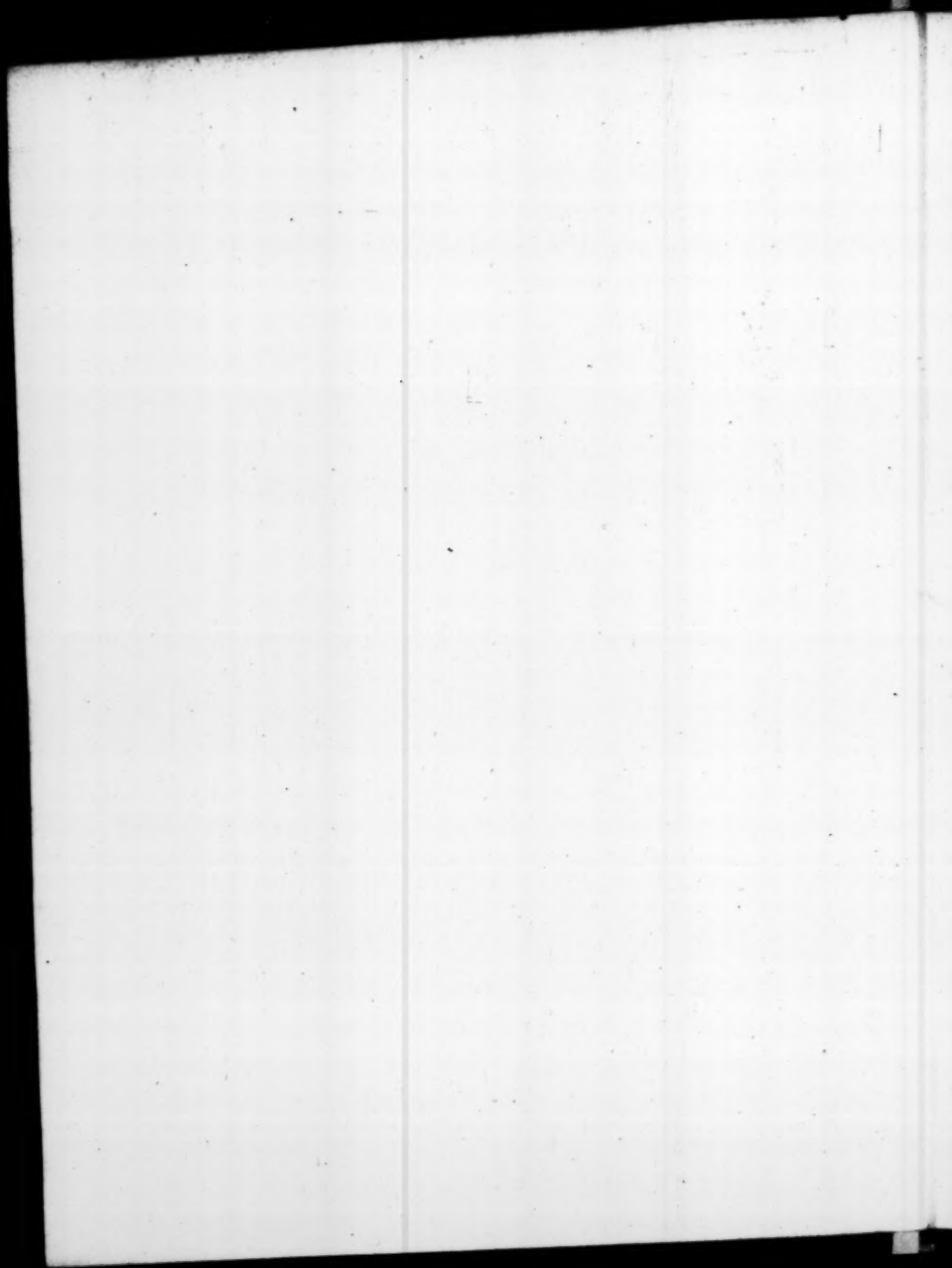
Jan. 19th, 1695.

By J. L A M B E D. D. Dean of Ely, and
Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

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L O N D O N,

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PROV. iij. 6.

*In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and
He shall direct thy paths.*

THough God has given the Dominion of this lower World to Man; tho' He has endued him with a competent Understanding for the wise and proper Managery of this Power and Trust, that every individual Person may be happy; yet this Dominion is not Absolute, but in Conjunction with, and Subordination to the Donor. He has not made us Independent, but our Grant is limited, and the Government of our Reason, and our Intire Submission to His most perfect Counsels, are reserv'd to Himself.

Indeed, our Nature is so framed that we cannot stand alone, that we cannot be Happy any other way, but under the Guidance and Direction of our Maker. For tho' we know a great many things, and might know many more if we attended to them; yet our Reason is imperfect at the best; not accurate enough to compare exactly one thing with another, that we may be sure to chuse what is really our Good,

nor piercing deep enough into the Effects of Causes, that we may prevent those evil Accidents which would destroy our Happiness.

And therefore, if we Separate our selves from our Principle, and lean to our own Understanding, we deflect out of the way of our Nature, and soon shall find our selves in dangerous and untrodden Ways: our Ends will be absurd, our Measures incompetent, and the Event of things will be fatal to us. But if we adhere to God, if we depend upon His Wisdom, and trust in His Power, He will not fail to prosper our Designs. For so says the wisest of Men in my Text, *In all thy Ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy Paths.*

This Book of *Proverbs* is a perfect System of Moral and Divine Philosophy, and proposes so compleat, so exact a Rule of Practice to us, which can never fail, if we carefully observe it, to make us Wise and Happy.

This Third Chapter, of which my Text is a part, insists in special manner, upon that principal part of Wisdom and Policy, the Resignation of our selves to God; or an intire Submission of our Opinions, Desires, and Actions, to His most Wise Direction. That we Judge of Good and Evil by those Accounts which He has given of it; That we Believe what
He

He Reveals ; That we confide intirely in His Word and Promises, and Do and Suffer cheerfully whatsoever He requires. *My Son, forget not thou my Law, but let thine Heart keep My Commandments, v. 1. Lean not to thine own Understanding, and be not wise in thine own Conceit ; but Fear the Lord, and Trust in Him with all thine Heart, at the 7th. Verse. Despise not His Chastnings, for whom He Loves He corrects ; And Happy is he who finds this Wisdom, at the 13th. Verse.*

Now my Text resolves these several Particulars, and all other Duties of the Kind, into this one standing Rule or Precept, *In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy Paths.*

Which Words consist of these two General Parts.

I. The First is an Exhortation or a Duty enjoyn'd, *In all thy Ways acknowledge Him.*

II. The Second is the Motive or Encouragement to the Practice of it, *And He shall direct thy Paths.*

I. I begin with the First of these, the Duty enjoyn'd, *In all thy Ways acknowledge Him.* And,

1. First,

1. *First*, I shall explain the *Nature* of the Duty, or what it is, and when a Man may be said, in his Ways to Acknowledge God. And,

2. *Secondly*, I shall consider the *Extent* and *Latitude* of the Duty, or the manner how it is to be performed, not partially, not only in some Particulars, but in *All* our Ways.

In all thy Ways acknowledge Him.

1. I begin with the First of these, and shall endeavour to explain the *Nature* of the Duty, or what it is, and when a Man may be said, in *His Ways to Acknowledge God*.

It is very usual, in the Holy Scriptures, by the Metaphor of our *Ways*, and our *Paths*, to express the Designs, the Aims, and Intentions of our Mind, together with our Actions consequent upon them, or our Prosecution of them in the Course of our Lives; and thus I shall understand it in my Text, as well with Respect to the Inward, Previous Motions of our Souls, and to our Visible and External Actions. For the outward Act has such an Inseparable Connection with the Principle, or Cause thereof, that it is impossible to give a Rule for the Regulation of the one, which shall not oblige us also in Respect of the other. And the Metaphor it self, is as natural and easie, when applied to the Motions of our Mind, as when it is limited to the Scope and Tendency of our outward

outward Actions. And, in Fact, it is used indifferently in the Holy Scriptures with Respect to both, or either, of them. *Thy Way is in the Sea*, says the Psalmist, speaking of God Himself; *Thy Paths are in the great Waters, and Thy Footsteps are not known*. That is, Thy Secret Counsels, and Thine External Dispensations, are both of them Inscrutable. And St. Paul cries out in an Holy Rapture, *Thy Judgments and Thy Ways* (which are join'd together) *are past our finding out; And who has known the Mind of the Lord?* Pf. 77. 19.
Rom. 11. 33.

Thus also in Respect of the Actions and Designs of Men; *Thou understandest my thoughts afar off*, says the Psalmist, *Thou compassedst my Path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my Ways*; that is, with all the Motions both of my Soul and Body. Psalm. 139. 2, 3.

If my Steps, says Holy Job, *have turned out of the Way, or if mine Heart has walked after mine Eyes, &c.* where the Motions of his Mind, as well as those of his Body, are express'd by his Steps and his Walk. Job 31. 7.

And this is enough to show, that by our Paths, and our Ways, in my Text, we may fairly understand our whole Capacity of Judging, Designing, Resolving, and Acting.

In all thy Ways, that is, in all the Deliberations of thy Mind, in all thy Consultations, Ends, and Actions,

Acknowledge God.

Truly &c. Recognize and Own Him; Remember, and reflect upon thy Relation to Him, that He is thy God and thy Creator, that thou art of Right, and of Necessity His Subject, that thou art merely by His Commission, and by that Power which He has given thee. *Acknowledge Him* to be thy Lord, thy Governour and Judge, that He is always present with thee, and that thou can't hide nothing from Him. *Set Him*, thus, in all thy ways, *before thy face*, as the Psalmist phrases it. This is the literal Construction of the word *Acknowledge Him*.

Pl. 16. 8.

But the Duty, in the Practice of it, extends a great deal farther. For it is not only an *Acknowledgment* of the Mind that is here required, but also all such proper Acts, as such an *Acknowledgment*, if it be sincere, will direct and prompt us to.

The Fifth and the Seventh Verses, which with my Text, make one intire and perfect Period, give us a sufficient Light both into the Sense of the Terms, and the Nature of the Duty. *Lean not to thine own Understanding*, V. 5. and, *Be not Wise in thine own conceit*, at the 7th. Verse, But,
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in all thy Ways acknowledge Him, as in my Text; which is the same as if He had said, Follow not the Bent and Inclination of thine own corrupt and sensual Will; Be not so foolish as to believe that thou canst stand alone; That by the Strength of thy natural Understanding thou canst make thy self happy; That thou canst form such Ends to thy self, as are every way most proper for thee, and chalk out the Best and aptest Means whereby thou may'st accomplish them, *Lean not to thine own Understanding*: What then should I do? Why, *in all thy Ways acknowledge God*, take His Advice and Direction with thee; be Over-rul'd and Govern'd by Him.

It is not then a distinct and simple Duty by it self, or that at certain times, in a solemn manner we recognize the Being, and the Attributes of God; But in *all* our Thoughts, Designs, and Actions, we are commanded to *acknowledge Him*. It is a Duty that is to mingle it self with all the several Motions of our Soul and Body. It does not terminate in our Mind or Tongue, but obliges us to all such proper Acts, as naturally flow from such a Recognition of Him. Is God our Sovereign Lord and King? Are we of right His Subjects? Do we act by His Permission? Is He conscious of every Motion

that we make? And do we acknowledge this? Why, then we are obliged by our own Confession, as well as by the Reason of the thing, to submit our selves *intirely* to Him; to suspend our Judgment, restrain our Affections, and forbear the Prosecution of our Design, till we are first acquainted with the Sense, and Pleasure of God in the Case before us; till we have prayed to Him for His Assistance, and submitted the Event of all to His Wisdom and Providence. This is, *in our Ways, to acknowledge God.*

For as all these several Acts are fairly implied in the Word it self, as it has been now explain'd, so there is nothing more usual in Scripture, than to mention only *One*, and that perhaps the lowest Act of a general Duty, when all the rest, that rationally flow from that that is express'd, are implied and understood. *God so loved the World*, says our Saviour, *That He gave His only begotten Son into the World, that whosoever Believeth in Him, should not perish, but have Everlasting Life*; but it must be in Conjunction with such a suitable Conversation, as such a Belief will prompt us to, because *the Devils Believe*, but yet they shall never be saved. And, *can Faith save ye?* says St. James, That is, it cannot save ye, *if it be alone.* And again, with the Mouth *Confession* is made unto Salvation, says

St. Joh. 3.
16.

James 2.
19.

Rom. 10.
80.

says St. Paul ; but it implies such a suitable Life as will follow such a *Confession*, if it be sincere : For, *not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord,* says our Saviour, *not every one that owns me, or is called by my Name, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that does the Will of my Father, &c.* Thus here in my Text, in all thy Ways acknowledge Him, the Act of *Confession* only is mentioned, when all such other Acts as such a Recognition prompt us to, are implied and understood. *He judged the Cause of the poor and needy, and then it was well with Him, was not this,* and nothing else without this, to know me saith the Lord ? Jer. 22. 15.

Wherefore then, to *Acknowledge God* in the Sense of my Text, is to Confess and Own Him, according to all those several Accounts, and Manifestations of Himself, that he has given us ; that He is our Sovereign Lord and King ; that we are intirely subject to Him ; that He has given us a Law, and that we ought to obey it ; that He knows our Thoughts, that He sees our Designs, and will reward and punish us according to our Works. : And that therefore we revere Him awefully, and submit our selves and our Designs intirely to His Will ; that we make Him always present to us, and never venture to embrace a Proposition, resolve upon an

End or do any considerable Action, till we have first compared it with the Rule that He has given us; and if we find it is against us, that we then reject it with all the Chearfulness in the World, though never so dear, or never so advantageous to us in Appearance; if we find it is with us, and that we may safely prosecute our Purpose, that we then proceed with Confidence, imploring first His Blessing, and submitting the Event of all to His good Will and Pleasure. This is the Sense of the Words, and the Nature of the Duty, *In thy Ways Acknowledge God.*

2. I proceed in the Second Place to consider the Extent, the Scope and Latitude of the Duty, not only in some Particulars, but *in All thy Ways Acknowledge Him.*

It is a Duty, indeed, that is not capable of Limitation, for unless our Resignation shall be Universal, it cannot be sincere. An industrious Reservation of our own Self-will, in any Instance, destroys our Principle intirely. For if we were in Earnest; if we Acknowledg'd God in Truth; if we believed our Relation to Him, and had made His Will the Supreme and leading Principle of our Actions, as the Duty requires, we could not presume, in any instance, to proceed without Him. Because the Principle, wherever it is True, must needs have the same effect
and

and force upon us in one thing, as it has in another. No Accidents or Occurrences, no Circumstances whatsoever, can either alter the *case*, or Release us from our Obligation. And therefore to pretend to *Acknowledge God*, unless we are *intirely* Resign'd to His Will, or so long as we have any Reserves, is either Self-deceit, or gross Hypocrisie. The Universality of our Submission, is the only Test of our Sincerity. For if we pick and chuse our Duties, and reject what we please, we do not take our Rule from God, but have framed it our selves, by our own Corrupt and Private Inclinations.

But let us not deceive our selves, there is no halting between both. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, says our Saviour; and, *He that offends in one Point*, says St. James, in the Sense before us, *is Guilty of all*. No! we cannot be said to acknowledge Him at all, unless we submit to His Direction, as well in those particulars, wherein our Temper and our present Inclinations, are more averse and contrary to His Will, as in those, where they are more consenting and agreeing with it. The very Life, and Spirit of the Duty is *Self-denial*, and especially in those particulars where our Wills are most perverse, and the Byas of our mistaken Interest and Pleasure are the strongest.

St. Mat. 6;
23.
St. Jam. 2.
10.

Thus

St. Chrysoſt.
upon St.
Mat. 16.

24.

St. Joh. 12.

25.

Eph. 2. 3.

St. Luk. 14.

26.

St. Mar. 18.

8, 9.

Col. 1. 21.

Εχθροὶ τῇ διακονίᾳ,

8, 9.

Thus *Abnega prorsus*, is our Saviour's account of the Duty, Deny thy self *intirely*, even to the *Hatred of thine own Soul*; or as St. Paul expresses it, that we Resign the *Οὐρανία ἡ σαρκία*, the things that we love and approve of: *Hands* and *Eyes, Lands, Houses and Relations*; that we submit all these, and whatsoever else shall stand in the way of our Duty, tho' we our selves are Enemies at the present in our Minds.

This then is the Sum of the Duty, in the full Extent and Latitude thereof, *In all thy Ways acknowledge God*, in every Motion of thy Mind, in every Design you undertake, and in every action that you do, let the Will of God be the Rule and Measure of your Proceedings. Move not without consulting Him, do nothing without His concurrence, Pray continually for His assistance, and chearfully submit to such an Event of things as He shall bring to pass. Thus much for the Duty.

2. I proceed, in the Second place, to consider the Encouragement, or the Motive that is offered to the Practice of it, *viz.* That if *in all our Ways we acknowledge Him*, He then *will direct our Paths*.

Two things are chiefly here to be considered:

1. *First,*

1. *First*, The Truth of the Proposition, or what Assurances we have that God will, indeed, *direct the Paths of those who in all their Ways acknowledge Him.* And,

2. *Secondly*, The Force of the Motive, or because He will vouchsafe to *direct our Paths*, that therefore, *in all our Ways we should acknowledge Him.*

1. *First*, I shall inquire into the Truth of the Proposition; or, what Assurances we have that God will, indeed, *Direct the Paths of those who in all their Ways acknowledge Him.* And,

1. *First*, I shall consider what this Blessing and Advantage means, or what we are to understand by this *Divine Direction* that is promised in my Text. And,

2. *Secondly*, That God will certainly make good this Promise to us, and *Direct the Paths of those who in all their Ways acknowledge Him*, according to the full intent and meaning of it.

1. *First*, I shall consider what this Blessing and Advantage means, or what is understood by this *Divine Direction* that is promised in my Text, or what we are to expect from God, when He says, *I will direct thy Paths.*

We cannot pretend to give an Account of all the Blessings that are contain'd in this amazing Condescension, *I will direct thy Paths*; but thus much,

much, however, it signifies, at least, that if we Acknowledge Him *in truth*, if we are Resign'd to His Will without Reserve, we shall have vast advantages, thro' His Assistance, in Forming our Designs, Adapting our Means, and Attaining our Ends; we shall proceed more Wisely, more Securely, and more Successfully than those who lean to their own Understandings, and are Wise in their own Conceits. For,

1. *First*, We shall be under the Direction of His *Law*, that *Eternal Law of our Creation*, which He has inscrib'd upon our Minds. Our Reason shall be Brighter, and more free from Prejudice; and by this Light, if we had no other, we should be able to discern, in every case, what is proper to be done, and how we are to proceed. And in this Sense that of *Solomon* is understood, in the 11th. Chapter of his Proverbs, at the 3d. Verse, *The Integrity of the Upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of Transgressors shall destroy them.*

But, *Secondly*, and in a more especial manner, we shall be under the Direction of His *Law Revealed*.

This points us plainly to our Duty and our Interest, and shows us, with the Finger, if there be no Prejudice upon our Minds, what is fit for us to Chuse, to Do, and to Forbear: It takes

us by the Hand, and puts us into the way that we should walk in, and keeps us steddy, safe and upright, till our Endeavours shall be Crown'd at last with such a Success as we our selves would wish. *He shall direct thy Paths*, is the Promise of my Text; and *this is the Way, walk in it*, says the Prophet *Esay*, speaking of the *Word of God*. *Isa. 30. 21.* And *Thy Word*, says Holy *David*, *is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my paths*; and therefore, *I have set thy Law alway before my face*, *Psal. 119. 105.* and so shall I not be moved, and so, in another place, *shall my Way be perfect*; without any Rub or Flaw, without any notable Error, or fatal disappointment; my Life shall be Easy, my Spirit Chearful, and I shall be as Happy as I can expect. *Psal. 16. 3. 30. 3.*

3. But this is not all the Direction that is contain'd in the Promise of my Text. For He has not only given us a Law that is perfect in it self, which, if we could observe, would make us *Wise unto Salvation*, and furnish us effectually, for every good Word and Work; but He will also direct us in a more Intimate and Immediate manner, how we shall apply this Rule to our proper Case, and in every Strait or Exigence that we shall happen to be under.

He will Inlighten our Minds, Encourage our Endeavours, Remove Impediments, Chear our
C Spi-

Spirits, and order all things Opportunely by His Providence, till He brings us Safe, at last, to our Journeys end.

For a Law, tho' it be never so *Holy, Just and Good*, yet it is not a sufficient Direction to so imperfect a *Reason* as ours is. For the Way of
 Jer. 10. 23. *man is not in himself*, as the Prophet *Jeremy* observes, *it is not in Man that walketh to direct his Steps*. We can do but very little more than Approve, Desire, and Wish, but are easily enticed, and drawn out of the way.

And therefore, notwithstanding the Plainness and Perfection of the Law of God, if He did
 Phil. 1. 19. afford us, also the *Ἐμπροσθέν τοῦ πνεύματος*, the supply of the Spirit, the Divine Assistance in a more Immediate manner; if He did not inject good motions into our Minds Himself, if He did not nourish and confirm them, if He did not quicken our Understanding, and blow up the Smoaking Flax; if He did not do as much of our Business for us, as is possible to be done with Safety to our Nature and the Freedom of our Choice, it would be impossible to keep our Way.

And this Immediate influence of his Power and Wisdom, over our Proceedings, is that which is principally promised in the words of my Text,
And He shall Direct thy Paths.

2. But this, and a great deal more, that we are not able so much as to conceive, He will certainly Vouchsafe to those, who, *in all their Ways acknowledge Him.*

Such a Consent of Will, such a perfect Resignation, as I have now described, create such a Sympathy between God and us, that we may be sure there shall be nothing wanting on His part, to complete our Happiness. Such an intire Submission of our Will to His, admits us into the Endearments of a near Relation, and gives us a sort of *Unity* with Himself, *in whom all Fulness dwells*, and from whom it will flow, in an Abundant manner upon us.

But there is no need of arguing from the Reason of the thing, since the Holy Scriptures, every where, abound with Promises of the Divine Assistance, in this particular and immediate manner, that we now Assert, and Insist upon. For,

Would you be Resolv'd, from an honest Principle, what Course you are to Steer that ye may be happy? Why, *He will teach you the way you shall Chuse.* PL. 25. 12.

Or, being entred, Are ye afraid lest ye should wander, and turn aside out of the Path again? Why, *The Good man's Steps are Ordered by the Lord, and He Delighteth in his Way.* PL. 27.

Or, Are ye afraid of Assaults upon the Road,

and do you distrust your own Ability to Resist them? Why, *He will lay no more upon thee than thou art able to bear, but will with the Temptation, also find a way for thee to Escape.*

1 Cor. 10.
13.

Or, Do you meet with Crosses and Afflictions as ye go? Why, *God will Hide thee under the shadow of his wings. And, He is a very present Help in trouble.*

Pf. 27. 8.
46. 1.

Or, Do ye find any Difficulties, any rugged Way, in the Road it self, and are ye afraid of Falling? Why, *When thou goest, thy Steps shall not be straitned, and when thou runnest thou shalt not stumble. And again, He will hold up thy Goings in thy Paths, that thy Foot-steps shall not slip.*

Prov. 4. 12.
17. 5.

Or, Do ye chance to fall indeed? (it is incident to the humane Nature, and God permits it, that we may know our selves to be but Men) yet it sha'n't be fatal; For, *tho' he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.*

Pf. 37. 24.

Finally, Are ye faint and weary? Do ye think it long till you gain your point, and see an Issue of your Labours? Be not solicitous; *All things shall work together for your Good. Commit thy way unto the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He will, certainly, bring it to pass.*

Rom. 8. 28.

Pf. 37. 5.

This is the Promise of my Text; This is the Covenant that God has made with those who
Resign

Resign themselves intirely to Him, that He will thus *Direct their Ways*.

These Promises, it cannot be denied, are exceeding great indeed; but can we hope that they shall be fulfill'd? Is not Man a voluntary Agent? Is it not his Essential Property, that He is the Master of Himself, and that all his Designs and Actions are the pure result of his own Choice? How then can he be acted by another, and yet retain the Liberty of his Will?

To Reconcile this seeming Contradiction, may appear a Difficulty at the first View of it; but if we carefully consider it, we shall find that both these Propositions are equally True, and very consistent with each other. For it is no where said, that God will act us Irresistibly, or that the Influences of His Grace shall be a Force upon us; He does not drive us against our Will, but takes us by the hand we *give* Him, and only leads the *Ductil* Temper, and the *Willing* Mind. We must *Acknowledge Him*, before He will *direct our Ways*; for He assists the Work of none but those who work themselves, or are willing to be wrought upon.

It must be allowed that the Communication of Spirits, or the Manner how all this is done; how God awakens our Understanding, how He changes our Mind, how He forms new Opinions in us, new
Resolu-

Resolutions, Vigour, and Affections, and how He assists our Endeavours all along, till our Course is finished, is to us unknown. And, indeed, we have no Reason to be concern'd about it ; it is enough that we Believe and Adore, but the manner how it is perform'd is above our Understanding, and therefore we ought not to Expect it, or inquire into it.

But the thing it self, or that they, why *in all their Ways Acknowledge God, shall be thus Directed by Him*, is evident to the Sense of all Good Men, asserted positively in the Holy Scriptures, and is no way *Repugnant* to our Reason, and that's sufficient.

For since God is Infinite in all Perfections ; since He is ignorant of nothing, Natural or Voluntary, that either is, or shall, or can be ; since the Secrets of all Mens Hearts, and the Operations of all Causes are before His Eyes ; it is easy to conceive, that He may as effectually influence a Rational Agent, as direct a Subject natural or merely passive.

Since He knows the present Disposition of our Souls, and the Order of all our Designs and Thoughts ; may He not inject His Motives, clear our Reasonings, prevent Temptations, encourage or dissuade our Purposes, and order all things opportunely by His Providence ?

The Will of Man is wrought upon no other
Way,

Way, than by the Appearances of things in his Understanding; and therefore if God has a perfect Knowledge of all the Motions of our Minds, of all our Doubts, Debates, Intentions and Designs, He may, without Dispute, according to our own Conceptions, afford us vast Advantages in Apprehending rightly, in Judging, Chusing, Resolving, and Acting as we ought to do; and this without any Prejudice at all to the Property of our Nature, the Freedom of our Choice.

Let it be so then; yet is it such a mighty *Blessing* to be led by another? Is there any Inconvenience so great, that a Man would not rather endure than part with his Liberty? Can there be a more perfect State of Happiness than to be Masters of our selves, to pursue our Inclinations, and do whatsoever pleases us? What then, though God will be pleased to *Direct my Paths*, is that enough to perswade me to give up my self intirely to Him, and in all my Designs, and Actions to be govern'd by Him? Yea, most certainly, it is an abundant Recompence.

2. And this was the last Particular I proposed to Consider, namely, wherein the Encouragement consists, and where lies the Force of the Argument; or, because He will vouchsafe to Direct our Paths, that therefore we should
run

run unto Him joyfully, and Resign our selves, without Reserve, to His Disposal.

Indeed, if we consider all its Weight and Strength, we shall find that it is *more* than an *Encouragement*, and must, of Necessity, *Determine* us. For as soon as we understand who it is that promises, and to whom the Promise is made, there can be no Hesitation or Doubt upon our Mind; the Case is clear, and we can do no other than yield to the force of the Motive.

For is it not our greatest Good, our truest Liberty, to be directed by the most Perfect Being? Are we not ignorant of a thousand times more than we know? Impatient of Happiness, but doubtful what to chuse? Busy and ambitious, passionate and eager, but not well knowing what we would have? Confident in our Way, very wise, as we think, in laying our Designs, but almost always Baffled, for the most part Disappointed? We cannot see far enough into the Effects of Causes to *Prevent* Impediments, nor are we strong enough to *Remove* them when they do Appear. Where Innumerable Agents have an eye to the self-same thing, where every one would make his Fortune, and All are running upon the heels of one another for the Prize, there must be interfering, Tumult, Clashing, and perpetual Contentions.

And

And will God, amidst these Difficulties, *direct the Paths* of those, who *in all their Ways acknowledge Him*? Surely we shall embrace the offer, lie down at His feet, and give up our selves intirely to Him.

1. For *now* we shall proceed by the Direction of Infinite Wisdom, and the most Perfect Knowledge. We shall be guided *now* by one who cannot mistake His Way. Instead of those Thorns; and Briars, Rocks and Precipices, Passions, Follies, Mistakes and Troubles that we have led our selves into, we shall *now* be put into a Road that is straight and Easy, that is *Broad* and safe. We shall be directed *now* to the best and Wisest Ends, and proceed Securely in the ready Way that will lead us to them. Ps. 119.

For *His Understanding is Infinite*, says the Psalmist, and, *By Him all Ways are trodden in Heaven*, Ps. 147. 5.
in Earth, and in the Deep.

He sees the Working of all mens Minds; All things lie before Him naked as they are; and therefore His Judgment cannot be imposed upon and His Directions must be certain and Infallible.

2. And Now that His Wisdom has put us into the proper Way, His Infinite Goodness, Love, and Pity, will guide us softly to our Journeys end.

We shan't be hurried by the Insolence of a Tyrant, but Gently led, with the *watchfulness of a Shepherd*, and the *tenderness of a Mother*. Ps. 23. 1.
Is. 49. 15.

He will suit His Directions to our Abilities, and give us such Commands as will improve our Nature, and advance our Interest. He will *consider our frame*, and Pardon our Deflections, put us again and again into the Way, and Restore us to His Favour upon Repentance. And thus, *His Arm shall support us, and His Rod shall Comfort us.* And therefore *His Saints* and Servants *Bless Him*, says the Psalmist, they Rejoice under His Guidance, and are satisfied with His Conduct of them.

Ps. 23. 2.

Ps. 144. 10.

But His Wisdom to direct us, and His Goodness to take care of us, tho' they are indeed very great Advantages, yet would hardly determine us to Resign our selves intirely to Him, unless He has also Power enough to defend us under all Assaults, and deliver us from all our Enemies; unless He can remove Impediments, assail all Difficulties, and bring our Ends and Designs to pass.

3. But His Power as well as His Wisdom, and Goodness, is Infinite and without Controul.

And this compleats the Qualification of a Guide, and even forces our intire Submission to His Will. For He does not only show us our Good, but will also certainly invest us in it. For, *His Dominion Ruleth over all. There is no End of His Greatness; And, He does whatsoever pleases Him, in Heaven and in Earth.*

And indeed, this Argument is oft'ner urged, in
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the Holy Scriptures, to our present purpose, (as being more plain and sensible, than any other.) *Trust in the Lord for ever, says the Prophet Isaiah,* Isai. 26. 4.
Why? because in the Lord Jehovah is Everlasting Strength. My Soul, says the Psalmist, *wait thou still upon God; Why so? because He only is my* Ps. 62. 5, 6.
Rock, my Refuge, my Defence, and my Salvation.

These are the Qualifications of our Guide; Infinite in Wisdom to Direct us, Compassionate and tender to Assist us, and of uncontrollable Power to accomplish our Designs.

These Eminent Qualities, no where to be found but in Himself, will both Justifie and Reward our most intire Resignation of our selves to be Govern'd by Him. For here we have all the Recompence that we can either ask or think of, for the Submission of our Private Will, which would undo us, to the most Perfect Will of God, Who can do no other than Order all things for the best.

This then is the Blessing, and this is the Encouragement to pursue it. No other Method of proceeding can pretend to the like Security. And therefore common sence, nay, the first and most obvious Principle of Self-love and Preservation, obliges us to embrace it.

1. For now we shall be always Fixed, Resolv'd and Steady; We shall be free from anxious

doubts, and cross Deliberations, and all our Thoughts shall glide on smoothly, in a calm and even Current.

We shall not *Stagger, like a Drunken man*, and be at our *Wits end*, as the Prophet describes the Misery of the Wicked, and Self-will'd. We shall not *wander in the dark, being destitute of God, and not know where to set our foot*, as the *Hier.* Philosopher expresses it. But we shall proceed with Confidence, and Certainty; one steady Principle, or the Will of God, presides and Rules over all our Thoughts, Designs and Actions, and we shall seldom be to seek, in any case, what is fit for us to do.

Or if, thro' our own unwariness, we chance to doubt, we shall never fail of the Divine Assistance; for, Thou *meetest Him*, (thou art always present to His help) *who considers Thee in Thine own Way.*

2. Now shall we be Sedate and Quiet, without Anxiety or Fear.

The Wicked travel in Pain, says Holy *Job.* They are not Equal to the business they propose; They put to Sea without a Pilot, and are liable to continual Storms and Wrecks. The World is their *All*, and Experience shows them that they can't Command it. Their Affairs are Subject to innumerable Contingencies, and therefore they are

are always in Apprehension of unexpected Accidents: And, which is worse, they have no other Stay to depend upon, no Refuge to betake them to. If they lose their present Aims, which is impossible for them to secure, they are utterly undone. And who can live under the Burden of such a slavish Fear?

But they who are Resign'd to the Will of God, are free from gnawing Care, and anxious Solicitude. They have put their Affairs into the Hands of the Wisest, and most Faithful Friend, who knows what is best, and can do what He will; no Impediment can Stop Him, no Accident can Cross Him, and therefore we are sure that that which comes to pass is, upon the Matter, fittest for us; and no Man can be afraid who is thus secured. *Τόλμουν ἀναβλέψαι πρὸς τὸ Θεόν*, &c. *Dare then to lift up your Eyes to God*, says the Philosopher, *and say, Guide me by thy Counsels whithersoever thou wilt; I am of the same Opinion with thy self, I will do and suffer whatsoever pleases Thee; and this shall give Thee Steadiness and Immobility. When thou liest down, says Solomon, thou shalt not be afraid, yea thou shalt lie down, and thy Sleep shall be sweet, for the Lord is thy Confidence.*

Arrian in
Ep.

Pro. 3 24.
25.

3. Now shall our Lives be easie, and we shall enjoy the most perfect Peace and Pleasure that we are capable of on Earth.

Briars,

Briars, Thorns, and Difficulties on every side, are in the way of the Wicked; Their Spirits are hurried by continual Cares and cross Events; their Minds are troubled with corroding, sharp Reflections upon themselves, with inward Upbraidings of their Rashness, Follies and Mistakes.

But he who has submitted his Affairs to the wisest Judgment, and put them under the conduct of absolute Power, and the most perfect Goodness, has nothing left to trouble himself about.

He is satisfied in his Guide, and waits the Event with an humble, dutiful Indifference.

He proceeds upon such certain grounds, and such a sufficient warrant, as will bear him out against himself; and there will be no room in his Breast for anxious Reflection, or Repentance. He acts according to the Law of his Creation; he is always in his proper Place, and doing his proper Work, which gives him a Share in that Delight and Harmony that arises from such an Obedience to our Principle, such an intire Consent of Will with God. *All perfect Beings, says the Philosopher, incline to their Author, and to embrace Him is agreeable, natural, and easie to us.*

Porphy.

4. Finally, they who are resign'd to God, shall, for the most part, be successful in their Undertakings; they have far more Reason to expect it in this, than in any other way whatever.

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The Wicked are so Eager in their Pursuits, that their Reason is clouded, and they run before their Judgment. They aim at things which are out of their Reach, and pursue them with equal Ignorance, and Zeal. And thus, *His own Counsels*, says the Psalmist, *make him fall*. Ps. 5. 10.

But they who in all their ways Acknowledge Him, shall, most commonly, attain their Hopes. They propose such Ends as are within their compass, and their Applications will be Regular and Effectual. Their Minds are Clear and Easy, which will give a Just and Proper Life, and Spirit, to all their Motions.

Besides the Supernatural assistances of God, who is concern'd for their interest in a more immediate manner; who has promised to take care of the *very hairs of their head*, and will certainly bring their Designs to pass, if it be for their Good. St. Mat. 10.

Upon the Matter then, to *Acknowledge God in all our Ways*, is not so properly a Duty, as a Privilege. For what can we desire or wish, that we may not obtain, if we take this Method of proceeding? Are we full of Defects and Wants, in this Imperfect State? they will all be supplied by the Wisdom and Power of God. Is our Judgment uncertain, and our Reason fallible? Are we long before we understand, and do we presently decay? Let us but resign our selves to God, and He'll

He'll make up whatsoever is wanting to us.

Oh stupid senseless Man, that art so hardly perswaded to be happy ! Are not steddiness of Mind, and Content in our Station, inward Satisfaction, and a sure and certain Refuge in distress, rather to be chosen, than to be vexed from within and from without ? to be Harra's'd by continual anxiety, and worn away by the effects of our foolishness, and the over-ruling Power of God ?

Look no more abroad for the Spring and Fountain of your Misery ; Cry out no more upon the Malice of the Wicked, or that Fortune is unkind, and Friends forsake you ; but turn your Eyes within, and know that all your Misfortune is from your selves. We cannot be perfect upon Earth, but we may be Easy, if we please.

Let every one of us then, look to our own particular Ways, and in all our Designs and Actions have respect to the Will of God ; so shall we have Wisdom from above ; so shall we have a certain Knowledge of our Interest, and shall manage our Affairs with that Sobriety, that Faith, that Trust and Hope in God, as will Issue in Success and Happiness on Earth, and Eternal Blessedness in the World to come. *To which, may God, &c.*
Amen.

F I N I S.